



New Jersey Department of Education



Getting ready

for the new
Web-accessible system...

**“The main ingredient
in stardom is the rest of
the team.”**

— John Wooden

***This is the first in a series of newsletters** the Office of Grants Management will share with those involved in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) grant management software project to create the EWEG system. We are off to a great start and have been working closely with our partner, The Innovation Group/MTW. We want to provide you with the latest information about the*

project. Below, you'll find "Check Points", a summary of the activities from the past month and "Looking Ahead," that outlines our plans for the coming month. Be sure to check "Memory Bytes" below. Here, we'll post upcoming training and testing dates and other important information that you'll want to know as we near our release date.

*If you have any questions or concerns as we move through the project, I encourage you to contact either Steve Esser, Project Manager or me by e-mail or phone.
Thank you,*

— **Anne Corwell,**
Director, Office of Grants Management



CHECKpoints

History of the Web-enabled Grant Initiative

After a three-year process, the NJDOE is working with The Innovation Group/MTW (TiG/MTW) on the Entitlement Web-enabled Grant Application (EWEG) project.

The online, automated EWEG system will manage New Jersey's Department of Education's IDEA and NCLB grants. The project involves taking NJDOE IDEA and NCLB grants application processes, systematically analyzing them to determine how they can best be made Web-enabled, and customizing the Web-enabled system developed by Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and transferring it to NJDOE's to create a new NJDOE Web-enabled system.

Since early December, NJDOE and TiG/MTW (the project team) have worked on the first phase of the EWEG project – implementing a “readied system.” The readied system is a direct transfer of the Missouri DESE system to a dedicated NJDOE-hosted Web-environment. With the implementation of the readied system complete, as of February 15, 2004, the project team's efforts have been focused on analyzing the unique needs of NJDOE and implementing changes necessary to create the final EWEG system. The project team plans for development and implementation of NJDOE's “customizations” to run until late April. The team anticipates that by early May the new application will be ready for testing with an intended launch date of June 2.

NJDOE Gets Its First Look at the Readied System

On February 21, 2004, Anne Corwell, EWEG Project Supervisor, Steve Esser, Project Manager, the TiG/MTW team and approximately 20 Department of Education personnel, including county office IDEA, IT, and NCLB staff met for a lively and informative meeting to formally start the EWEG project.

Anne Corwell discussed the history of the EWEG initiative and introduced the project's major participants. Kevin Green, TiG/MTW Vice President of the Public Sector, explained TiG/MTW's involvement with the EWEG process and its role in bringing the project to completion. Steve Esser outlined the project's timeline and expectations for EWEG, including the project's multiple phases. The meeting concluded with Cinthy Rosser, TiG/MTW Technical Lead and Eric Lindenber, TiG/MTW Project Manager, conducting a walk-through of the “readied” system. “The session's participants had great questions,” commented Eric Lindenber. “You could see their enthusiasm about the system and how it will help them in their day-to-day work.”



The week of February 16

The project team conducted a series of training workshops to familiarize IDEA and NCLB program office staff with the inherent functionality (and look and feel) of the readied application. A cross-representation of grants staff reviewed the "global" look and feel of the readied system and made recommendations as to how it might be modified to better suit NJDOE. Recommendations included a new and streamlined navigation paradigm, suggestions for appropriate help links and locations, the introduction of modified graphics and color schemes, and ease-of-use modifications to help reduce the learning curve necessary to use the new system. The week also included the project's official kick-off meeting (see 'NJDOE Gets Its First Look at the Readied System').

The week of February 23

Beginning Monday, February 23 and continuing through the week, Pat Holcomb-Gray, IDEA Program Coordinator, and the EWEG project team reviewed and analyzed NJDOE's paper processes for the Basic and Preschool IDEA applications. Quoting TiG/MTW's Project Manager, "As the team delved into the details of the program, Pat's eyes lit up. We explored how we could streamline the grants application process, introduced ways to ensure district-provided data is complete and accurate, and determined how we could automate repetitive entry and mathematic operations required of the paper process." At one point, Pat said, "You guys are great! You are not only giving me what I want, but what I need."

The week of February 29

The project team met with representatives from each of the NCLB title programs. In a series of small analysis sessions, the project team reviewed the existing readied screen (or screens) relevant to a specific grant program and worked with the grant personnel to determine how the system needed to be modified to better match or enhance NJDOE's application process. Areas reviewed and analyzed included: Title I Eligibility, Title IIA, Title IID, Title III, Title III Immigrant, Title IV, Title V, Title VI, and needs assessment. In cases where additional information was needed, the project team gave meeting participants "action items" to complete and return to the project team outside of the analysis sessions.



LOOKINGahead

Writing It All Down

The project team is assembling all information gathered during the two weeks of analysis sessions, in addition to action item determinations, and compiling user specification documentation. User specifications act as a blueprint for how to complete the EWEG system. Each user specification will include a screen mock-up, a description of how the screen will work (and the logic supporting it), and a detailed explanation of how the data on the screen is to be captured, stored and displayed. As the team completes each user specification, a number of NJDOE staff including appropriate program people, the EWEG Project Manager and the EWEG Project Supervisor will review the specification to ensure that it is accurate and complete.

After NJDOE accepts each user specification, development can begin. EWEG development is scheduled for late March through early April with User Acceptance testing slated to begin at the conclusion of development. User Acceptance testing is an intensive process where the completed application is turned over to NJDOE staff (both at the NJDOE and county levels) for review. The purpose of User Acceptance testing is to ensure that the completed application has been customized to NJDOE's specifications and that it functions according to expectations.

Back to School

Beginning in May, the project team will begin conducting training sessions on the EWEG system. While the training plan is not finalized, the overall goal will be to familiarize users (districts) and administrators (reviewers) with the details of the system. The project team will conduct training in two phases: grant administration and train-the-trainer sessions. Grant administration training will focus on giving grant reviewers the knowledge and tools required for reviewing and approving or disapproving applications within the EWEG system. Train-the-trainer sessions will focus on educating appropriate grants personnel on how to conduct user-training sessions for district users across the state. Both sets of training sessions are slated to include hands-on activities, as well as distribution of hardcopy and electronic training materials.

Click, Calculate, Save and Submit

As the NJDOE moves closer to the anticipated June 2 release date, the project team will be conducting its own spring training routine by developing new training materials. Staff involved with the IDEA and NCLB know there are extensive processes and procedures that NJDOE employees and grant applicants must follow to comply with federal and state guidelines. By integrating the EWEG system into the grant management process, it is necessary to revise current training materials. The NJDOE project team will develop new training materials with the help of the TiG/MTW Technical Writer, Sheila Miller. Additionally, Sheila will be working with the project team to develop user-help tools within the Web application. User-help tools include defining terms, explaining processes and providing instructions about how to complete particular processes within the system.

Parting Thoughts

When using a Web application like the EWEG system, it is easy to overlook the technology involved in making a system function successfully. From designing how the system will protect and secure the content stored on the system server to determining how the EWEG system will integrate with the NJDOE Homeroom security system, the project team will be very busy bringing the EWEG vision to reality. If you have questions or suggestions for the EWEG system, please feel free to contact the initiative's Project Manager, Steve Esser.

MEMORY BYTES: Did you know that...

...with a Web-accessible computer you can use the EWEG system anytime, anywhere?

...the system automatically calculates budget and allocation totals based on user entries?

Thank you for your continued interest in NJDOE's EWEG System.

If you'd rather not receive the EWEG newsletter, send an e-mail to admin@ewegsystem and type 'no thanks' in the Subject Line.